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“The Old Ways”—or the Pilgrims and their Principles.

A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

ANNIVERSARY OF THE LANDING OF THE PILGRIMS,

DELIVERED IN

BROADWAY CHURCH, CHELSEA, MASS.,

DECEMBER 21, 1856

BY JOSEPH A. COPP,

Pastor of the Church.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BOSTON:

PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN, 42 CONGRESS STREET.

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THIS Discourse, is affectionately dedicated by their Pastor, to the people of his charge, in the hope, that they and their children, may love and cherish for themselves, and transmit to posterity, the principles and virtues of their Pilgrim Fathers.

DISCOURSE.

JEREMIAH VI. 16.

THUS SAITH THE LORD, STAND YE IN THE WAYS, AND SEE, AND ASK FOR THE OLD PATHS, WHERE IS THE GOOD WAY, AND WALK THEREIN, AND YE SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.

THUS the Prophet instructs his erring and discouraged countrymen, to look back on the better days of their history. He invites them to review the causes which, in a former period, had built them up to great prosperity; and to consider, that a departure from these had led to the present humbled and distressed condition of the nation.

As a lost man, beginning to feel the inconvenience of his situation, and the folly that had led him astray, seriously sets about to inquire for and regain the lost path, so the Prophet admonishes wandering Judah to consider the moral causes which had led them into distress, and to commence retracing their steps to those principles from which they had departed, and apostasy from which, had occasioned all their misfortunes. Therefore they are exhorted to “stand in the ways,” to pause and

consider, to “ask for the old paths,” “the good way,” in which their fathers had walked, and in returning to which, they could only expect to “find rest for their souls.”

These words are not without an application to the people of this country and our day. We of New England, the children of the Pilgrims, may profitably look back on our history, and, ascending the stream of generations, contemplate those memorable days, when our Fathers planted their infant institutions on these Western shores. It will be profitable to review their times and labors, not only as deeply interesting history, but to determine the practical and more important question, how far their principles survive, and are felt amongst us. What were the “old paths” and “good way” of the Fathers, and to what extent are they recognized and followed by their children? This is the simple object of inquiry at this time. And for such an inquiry, no time seems more fitting than to-day, the anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims from the Mayflower. Since that event, two hundred and thirty-six years have passed away—a somewhat lengthened period, shedding the light of history and experience on the principle and issues of that ever memorable day.

The settlement of New England was indeed a memorable event, in all its aspects. In contemplating this subject, let us consider, *First*, the design of the settlement by the Pilgrims; *Secondly*, the principles on which it was made and conducted by them; and *Thirdly*, the duty of reviving the influence and imitation of their virtues.

I. WHAT WAS THE DESIGN OF THE PILGRIM SETTLEMENT IN NEW ENGLAND ?

Of this event, the great and singular design is clearly set forth in a declaration made by the Pilgrims, while they were yet in Holland, where they had found shelter from English persecutions. Among other and inferior causes assigned for leaving their retreat among the Dutch, they mention this as the leading and decisive one:—"AN INWARD ZEAL AND GREAT HOPE, OF LAYING SOME FOUNDATION, OR MAKING WAY FOR PROPAGATING THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST, TO THE REMOTE ENDS OF THE EARTH."

The object of our Fathers was thus a religious one. They sought a place, where they could enjoy unmolested the rights of conscience, and "make a way for propagating the kingdom of Christ," on the foundations of a well constructed Christian State. Such a design was peculiar to the Plymouth Pilgrims, and solitary among the numerous colonizing enterprises of that day. There were colonies from Spain, France, England, Portugal and Holland, planted on the Islands and Continents in every latitude ; but their general objects were commercial. Wherever new fields were penetrated by the bold Navigator, they were at once occupied for barter and wealth. The Spaniard who sought gold in El Dorado of the South, but expressed, by this movement, the general cupidity. New lands were added, and new settlements made, but all, to satisfy the thirst for empire and for earthly riches.

But in that day of enterprise and discovery, when the seas were swarming with greedy adven-

turers, and the shores dotted with trading stations, it was the glory and honor of one little company, of one little band of enterprising and fraternal spirits, to propose an object as singular in that age of mercenary traffic, as it was grand in itself, to make a settlement for the glory of God, and the propagation of the principles of his kingdom. And never did adventurer, in pursuit of gold, with more zeal and ardor spread the flowing sail, than did the Pilgrims plunge into a wintry sea, to plant, on a distant and desolate coast, the institutions of religion and Christian society.

But as the long line of the American coast stretched out before them, from the Bay of Fundy to Georgia, why did they not select a more genial clime? Here, again, the providence of God and the principles of the men decided the event. They had entertained, for a time, a thought of settling in the West Indies, or under the patent of Virginia. They were also directed and encouraged by the book of Sir Walter Raleigh, the Bayard Taylor of that day, to look towards Guiana, which the warm genius and glowing pen of that statesman-adventurer, had painted in all the fascinating attractions of another paradise. But no charms of earthly scenery, or promise of luxury and wealth, had power over the Pilgrims to turn them from the indications of duty, or silence the demands of principle and conscience in their breasts. They wanted liberty and protection to plant and build up their own institutions of church and society. The ministers of King James would not grant them these rights, within any existing patent.*

* Prince, from Bradford, p. 50.

They therefore turned away from the warm, fertile South, and with God and liberty on their standard, preferred to plant the seeds of a nation amid the frosts and snows of New England. The result has illustrated the stern wisdom of the Fathers. It has shown how an overruling Providence directed all their ways. Here they said, amid the solitudes of a depopulated coast, with none to dispute our claim, we may lay the foundations of our Christian enterprise "as stepping-stones to others." That memorable declaration, "AS STEPPING-STONES TO OTHERS." Did ever, in our world before, a colony indicate such a spirit—such a noble, self-sacrificing purpose, for the good of future times? They were not in search of gold, or honor, or temporal empire. They had conceived a great idea; they had struck upon the true view of social Christian development; and they wanted a fair field, large and wide, to try the experiment, and Providence led them to the right spot for the work. A virgin soil, amid granite hills, was the fitting earthly foundation for planting institutions, which were destined to become as solid and enduring as those granite hills themselves.

Leyden in Holland, was no place for the Pilgrims to build for the future. There they, indeed, enjoyed protection and repose. The Dutch were kind to our Fathers. Let us remember our lasting obligations to that people, for the generous and hospitable shelter which their fathers extended to ours in Holland. But that was no field for the great work these devoted men were called to execute. Like Abraham, God said unto them, "Get

thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." Their old homestead was in England; there were the graves of their fathers; but England had become a cruel step-mother. The blood of her Puritan children were in her garments. They looked across the channel to their dear old native land—What Briton ever forgets his native isle!—but it was the look of an exile, who knows no welcome. "We are well weaned," was the declaration of Robinson and Brewster, "from the delicate milk of our mother country, and inured to the difficulties of a strange land; the people are industrious and frugal. We are knit together as a body in a most sacred covenant of the Lord, of the violation of which we make great conscience, and by virtue whereof we hold ourselves straitly tied to all care of each other's good, and of the whole. It is not with us as with men whom small things can discourage." * Then they turned their eyes to the West. Beyond a dark, stormy, almost unknown world of waters, rose in the dread distance, before their imaginations, the unexplored coast. But God threw the colors of hope over the wilderness before them, and they said, "The sun shines as pleasantly on America as on England, and the Sun of Righteousness much more clearly." "Let us remove whither the providence of God calls, and make that our country, which will afford what is dearer than property or life, the liberty of worshipping God in the way which appears to us most conducive to our eternal well being."

* Bancroft, Vol. I. p. 304.

Pain and trial are the price of all great and good things in this world. If we will look into the history of our world, the moral history of man, and follow the progress of events, we will understand, because we shall see what is here meant. There is no principle that has fuller illustration or more striking correspondences. Suffering is the antecedent of great virtue and usefulness. It may not be so in other spheres; it is not so in a better world. But so it is in this sinful world; and because it is sinful, is probably the true reason. It was from the agony of Egyptian bondage, and long discipline in the wilderness, that the Hebrews were prepared to plant their typical institutions in Canaan. It was by the process of seventy years' suffering, that idolatry was eliminated from that nation. Our Saviour inaugurated the dispensation of Christianity in suffering and blood. He said to his disciples, in a last interview, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." An apostle said afterwards, He "was made perfect through suffering." And so when the infant church went forth from Jerusalem to its mission in the world, it went out under a baptism of suffering. When religion re-appeared from the night of the middle ages, it was born amid persecutions and bitterness. This law seems to hold in respect to all those great events, on which turn the destiny and prospects of men. Some minds would reason differently, but they reason without historical precedents, and without either a scriptural or philosophical view, of the present moral nature of man, and the methods

by which he attains higher excellence. As man is born into the world with weeping, so every great moral development to which he is conducted as an individual, or in community, is preceded and sanctified with suffering. The night comes before the morning, agitation before repose, trial before peace and joy. When the individual is born again to the true light of the gospel, this too is a birth out of sin, through a repentance of anguish. Hence the universal application of that Scripture to all good men, "The fellowship of his sufferings." What renewed and eminently holy heart, has not such a fellowship with Christ? The Pilgrims had such a fellowship. They had it in English courts and prisons, before they were driven across the channel into exile, and across the ocean to the new world; and here, after they landed on Plymouth rock, the ordeal was not ended; in five months they made New England soil precious, by intrusting to its faithful keeping, the sainted dust of about one half their whole number. And did they repine and despond at their hard lot, and give up the difficult enterprise? It is wonderful in reading the journals of that day, to see what little mention they make of their trials. Those stern Calvinists—you suppose them cold, without sympathy and feeling—enamored of theories and principles austere and dogmatic, you think they were destitute of gentler emotions. No conclusion could be farther from the truth. Their kindness for each other, their sympathy in each other's sufferings, their self-sacrificing devotion, out-gushing tenderness, it would be difficult to parallel in the records of the

human heart. They watched with the sick and dying, they comforted and soothed bereavement and anguish with unwearying patience. They wept with the stricken mourner, and over the honored dead, as though they were born only to the office of tenderness, and emotions of sympathy. But they did not murmur, they did not talk of their trials, they made no long laments, they never seemed to lose confidence in their object. They were willing to sow in tears, that others might reap in joy. Patiently and fearlessly did they illustrate those great words, to be "as stepping-stones to others."

It required the agony of such a birth to give to the world the mighty results that have followed. One great mind to an age, it has been said, is all nature can afford; but of such men as the Pilgrims, Providence gives them to the world by an allotment still more parsimonious and rare.

How foolish and vain is man; how blind and short-sighted. The Puritans were despised and persecuted, and driven out of England. The church cut them off, the government worried them, the gentry laughed at them, Butler lampooned them. But it was the process of a wise Providence, shelling out the pure grain, and planting it deep in the right soil. Kings, ecclesiastics and courtiers were but the instruments to a husbandry, such as they dreamed not of. Carlyle has said, with his characteristic point, "Puritanism was only despicable and laughable then, but nobody can manage to laugh at it now; it is one of the strongest things under the sun at present." The Pilgrims stole away from the

mother country, followed by the curses and derision of the rulers and the rabble. But they went out in weakness, to return in power—they went out despised and a little one, to be welcomed by-and-by with triumph. The little Mayflower steals away from the English coast, as though she were a smuggler or a pirate. But the times are changed, the contemptible is now exalted, and the laughed at cannot be honored too highly. Could proud Elizabeth have believed, could it have been made to enter the head of intolerant James, and gay, licentious Charles, that the day was coming in the history of Great Britain—the day of her greatest power and glory—when this same humble scene of the sailing of the Mayflower, should be emblazoned by order of the government, on one of the panels of the house of Lords. Have patience, says the sage, ‘God is with the right, and truth will prevail.’

The Pilgrims were brought to these shores, to lay the foundation of principles, Christian and social, superior to and in marked distinction from those of all other settlements on the coast, and therefore the coast was kept open for the advent. Many attempts were made to build up establishments here, but without success. New England coast was a sacred, reserved dominion. Providence kept all others away. ‘Their designs (says Cotton Mather) being aimed no higher than the advancement of some worldly interests, a constant series of disasters has confounded them.’ The land which had been cleared of its savage inhabitants four years before by a desolating pestilence, which left not a claimant behind, was also forbidden to

the employments of mere trade and worldly traffic. It was kept in store, for an infant church which God was preparing for the important field. Plantations for trade, for peltry, tobacco and gold, were common enough along the American coast, but a plantation on purely Christian principles, and with Christian designs, this was the first. And so soon as it was planted, this object became immediately known, and was so accepted by all the settlers on the coast. In common estimation, the singular honor of being the house of God in the wilderness, was awarded to it. That this was the general estimation then and long after in which it was held, may be shown by an anecdote related by Cotton Mather. He says that a minister from the Bay, visited a trading and fishing settlement somewhere down East, and preaching there to the people, "he besought them to approve themselves as religious, for if they did not, he said, they would contradict the main end of planting this wilderness; whereupon one in the assembly cried out, 'Sir, you are mistaken; you think you are preaching to the people of the Bay; but our main end was to catch fish.'" Precisely so. The main end of the other colonies and settlements in the New World, was property and wealth, 'the loaves and fishes.' This one established by the Pilgrims, was the first one, the only one, established as a religious and moral enterprise. They did not certainly forget their own interests as Christians and men, in seeking the New World. They wanted an asylum—security of rights, religious and civil—where they could worship God unmolested, and where they could sow

and plant, and gather undisturbed, the fruits of their labor. They did not forget their own immediate welfare, but they were careful that their own interest should harmonize with, and be subordinate to, the grander object of promoting the kingdom of Christ in the world. Such, then, was the great object of the Pilgrims. Let us now consider,

II. THE PRINCIPLES OF THESE PEOPLE.

1. The first great principle which characterized the Pilgrim Colony, was the supreme authority of the Scriptures. Their first institution was the Bible. They contended, that this alone contained their religion, and was the only supreme guide in matters of faith and practice. In England, this was the basis of their difficulty with the government, and the established church. They did not object to the doctrine of the thirty-nine articles of the church, indeed they embraced that doctrine. But they avowed the supremacy of the Scriptures, and the inviolable rights of conscience and worship under them. Here, they contended, was a power, higher than kings, bishops or church, in its legitimate sphere a supreme authority, and to interfere with it, was treason against the God of heaven. This was the gist of the controversy between the Puritans on the one side, and the Government and the Church on the other, for more than a hundred years before New England was colonized.* They were loyal subjects to the crown. England had no better subjects in all that regarded her constitution and honor. The only

* Prince's Chron. p. 91.

ground of disagreement was the demand for a free Bible, and of free conscience and free worship under it. To enjoy this privilege, and raise up a community where this should be the common enjoyment, they planted these shores. The Bible, therefore, was their first institution. It was the only binding authority in the church, and the highest in the state. They received it as profitable to all things, having the promise of this life and that which is to come. To this principle they steadily adhered, for in 1641, twenty-one years after their settlement, the Plymouth Colony passed an ordinance that "no injunction shall be put on any church, or church member, as to doctrine, worship, or discipline, whether for substance or circumstance, beside the command of the Bible."

2. The doctrinal principles of the Pilgrims. These were such, as constitute the evangelical system. They adopted a plain, simple, straight-forward understanding of the Bible, in all its doctrines and requirements. Nothing was received into special favor because soft and agreeable, and nothing left out because harsh and trying. They received the whole word as God's, and believed the divine wisdom would put nothing in it which was not useful. It was this close adherence to the Bible doctrines, and conformity of their lives to them, that gave so much offence. "These Puritans (said King James in the star-chamber) must not be countenanced." It was not because they had the Bible, for that had been given to the whole kingdom, but because they would follow its teachings so exactly, that

* Thacher's Eccl. Hist. Plym. pt. iii. p. 267.

they became a standing reproof to his majesty's good subjects, and thus were obnoxious to the censure of the times. And why have the Bible at all, they thought, if not to believe and follow *all* its teachings? Enlightened by the Spirit of God, they discovered a heavenly meaning in every doctrine, and found spiritual food in every part of the holy volume. They discovered, as they believed, the doctrines of Luther, Calvin, and Knox, in the Scriptures, and as honest, Christian men, they must avow and follow them. With the doctrine of the Church of England, as contained in the Articles, they had no controversy. Had this been all, they could have lived and died contentedly in her communion. But there were rites and observances enforced, which they could not endure. There were demands on their consciences which they could not meet, without sacrificing honesty and duty, and therefore they went out. But though they abjured her hierarchy, her intolerant spirit, her politico-religious constitution, they still cherished the doctrines of her Articles, as containing the great system of evangelical truth. The doctrinal principles of the Pilgrims were what are now termed Orthodox. They followed the Genevan school, and were firmly grounded in the doctrine of the Trinity, the depravity of human nature, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the regeneration of the soul by the Spirit of God, a life of holiness, and eternal rewards and punishments in the future state, according to character here. In some respects, their customs and opinions may have been carried too far. But it should be

remembered, that they came out of a church where the most offensive laxity was the rule—where Sunday was made a holiday, and a system of sports for its desecration was required by law to be read from the pulpit, and where public morals had sunk to the last degree of degeneracy. No wonder our Christian fathers revolted with horror from such shocking dissoluteness, and set up a high standard of their own. The Sabbath was to be sacredly kept, profaneness, lewdness and frivolity were discountenanced, gaming was forbidden, and a strict moral deportment was enjoined.

Their standard was high—in some aspects, sternly so; but it is better to be too high than too low. The tendency in human society is ever to lower the standard, both in doctrine and practice. Thousands of years ago, heathen sages felt and exclaimed over the follies of men and the universal tendency to degeneration. The world is indebted to Orthodoxy, or the evangelical system of the gospel, for resisting this tendency. Woe to mankind when this standard shall fall. It is the great conservative principle of life and health to Christendom. Perhaps, at times, it may be regarded as stern and uncompromising, but still it is the bulwark of our virtues and the citadel of public morals. And should the day ever come, when pure old Orthodoxy shall strike her standard to a soft and luxurious age, then shall we have the beginning of the end of social disorganization. The world will have reached those last times of the Apostle, (2 Tim. iii.,) in which wickedness, losing all respect

for decency or religion, will abound and triumph in the earth.

It was the conservative influence of the Puritans, that saved England from the degeneracy to which she was fast sinking in the seventeenth century, and revived the dying embers of her expiring religion. And Puritanism came here, and planted her standard on these shores of New England, and here diffused her doctrines and her spirit abroad ; and but for this, the people of these States to-day would have been no better than the children of the Catholic Spaniard of Mexico or South America. As far as the Puritan doctrine and spirit have gone, we discern the happy effects on society. Where a lower standard and softer elements have prevailed, we find a corresponding degeneracy. The highest style of character, both intellectual and moral, including the moral graces and civil virtues, comes from the mould of old Puritanism. And yet some make merry over the olden ways, and laugh at the notions of the Puritan Fathers ; but it is scarcely a compliment, to one's judgment or taste, to laugh at what history shows, as Carlyle says, " is one of the strongest things under the sun."

But once more, the Pilgrim Fathers laid the foundations of the state on the joint principles of religion, liberty, and labor. Free religion, civil liberty, and honorable labor. Smarting from under the rod of civil and ecclesiastical oppression, they came here to found a just and Christian government. They were the descendants and associates of a class who had long been the true conservators

of constitutional liberty. Their determined interference had saved it more than once from the usurpations of the Stuarts. The historian Hume, who hated the Puritans, is yet compelled to do them this justice. He says "the precious spark of liberty had been kindled and was preserved by the Puritans; and it was to this sect, whose principles and habits appear so ridiculous, the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution."

With this love of liberty, they began the founding of institutions in New England. To this liberty, they united as its natural auxiliary and true ally, free, honorable labor. You may say they were laborers from necessity; they were also laborers from principle. They considered labor honorable as an example, profitable as a duty, and useful as a discipline. It was with them, that it rose to the dignity of an institution; and they went back for that, as they did for everything else, to the inspired authority, where it was written, "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." And thus free, honorable labor, entered into their idea of what constitutes a true state organization. Society thus took form under their hands, thus it grew up and spread out. And even in this day, the good old leaven works; there is not a country in the world, where liberty is so dear, and labor so honorable, as here in New England. True piety and wisdom will ever guard the reputation of labor, and among the great elements of society will deem it no less necessary than noble. It belongs, says an eminent statesman, to the "great, substantial interest on which we all stand. Not feudal service, nor pre-dial toil of one race of mankind subjected to the

control of another ; but labor, intelligent, manly, independent, thinking and acting for itself, earning its own wages, and accumulating its own capital, educating childhood, maintaining worship, and helping to uphold the great fabric of the state. That is American labor." Yes, and let us add, to our Pilgrim Fathers belong the honor of having laid, in our social system, this great and noble principle. Religiously did they lay down this principle, and religiously did they obey it, for Bradford and Brewster, the Governor and Minister, labored side by side, in the field together.

Such were the principles of the Pilgrims. Their principles have made us what we are, and our country what it is. These are the principles of a true humanity, and of a sound and well adjusted state organization, and which find their high authority in that inspired religion which recognizes our duty to God and each other.

But the review which has been taken to-day—too rapid and imperfect we know—of the work of our honored Fathers, should not be merely for barren admiration, or the aimless purpose of recalling the events of an extraordinary people and time. Rather should we read their history, to cherish and practice their principles ; therefore,

III. IT IS THE DUTY OF THE CHILDREN OF THE PILGRIMS, TO REVIVE THE INFLUENCE AND IMITATION OF THEIR ANCESTRAL VIRTUES.

The memories we recall to-day, were of men who acknowledged no obligations in theory, which they did not meet in practice. The principles for which they contended and suffered, of their religious and

social creed, they illustrated in their lives. Before God and man, they endeavored to maintain a conscience void of offence. They had a Sabbath, and it was sacredly observed. The Holy Scriptures, we have seen, was their first institution, revered as the palladium of their liberties and rights, and its precepts faithfully obeyed. They sought the development of a pure "church and state," and opposed their whole moral force against immorality, profaneness, and sins and vices of every kind. They planted the house of God in their midst, and its stated worship was honored by the observance of all the people. In a word, their whole system of Christian, moral and social life, was sustained on principle; and its obligations, as they understood them, faithfully discharged. Such was the spirit and high position of our ancestors.

But it will be said, if they had virtues, history has also recorded their faults. All that our Fathers did, we do not approve. They were men, and in some things erred. Men educated in an age of intolerance and darkness, when human rights were imperfectly understood, should not be expected to have escaped every error of their times.* If their action in some things want our approval, of their great principles we cannot speak in too high praise; and of the men themselves, they were of a noble and magnanimous type. Take them altogether, and perhaps the world had never before seen such a company. In the long history of colonization, such another group as made its advent on Plymouth Rock, from the deck of the Mayflower, cannot be shown.

* See Felt's Eccle. Hist. p. 551.

Though more than two centuries have passed away, still the Pilgrims live in their works. They stamped their image on a nation, and successive generations of its children rise up and call them blessed. It is the prestige of such an ancestry, that New England is what she is to-day. And this old Commonwealth will cease to deserve the admiration which she now receives from an enlightened world, when her people shall cease to revere the memories and imitate the virtues of the Fathers.

It is a profitable exercise, and inspires the sentiment of a virtuous self-respect, to look back on our honorable past. In these vacillating and unsettled days, when every man has his parable, and novelties come in upon us like a flood, it is well to "stand in the ways, and ask for the old paths." Let us go and refresh our memories at the sepulchres of our Fathers, and invigorate our languid spirits by the study of their simple, earnest souls. We need their virtue to re-inspire us, to infuse new life into our institutions, to reform our times, and new direct our aims. Let us look back and inquire for that "good way, and walk therein, and we shall find rest for our souls."

Alas! the vitality of the olden time is sadly impaired, and the pure principles of the Fathers have lost somewhat of their ancient lustre, in these days of invention and change. The progress of time has indeed brought along its important improvements; but then, progress must not be permitted to unsettle those foundations of truth, religion, and social order, which are established by inspiration of God, and settled by long experience. If we

would look forward to the future with hope, we must ground ourselves firmly on the settled principles of the past. The time will never come, when the sound, Christian piety of Robinson and Brewster, and the enlightened wisdom and prudence of Carver, may not still be consulted as lights in the Church and in the State. In the moral perceptions, the virtuous stability, noble disinterestedness, and simple piety of our Fathers, we find the elements of true prosperity, both social and civil. It is due to ourselves and the interests of our country, that we ever keep in view this excellent model.

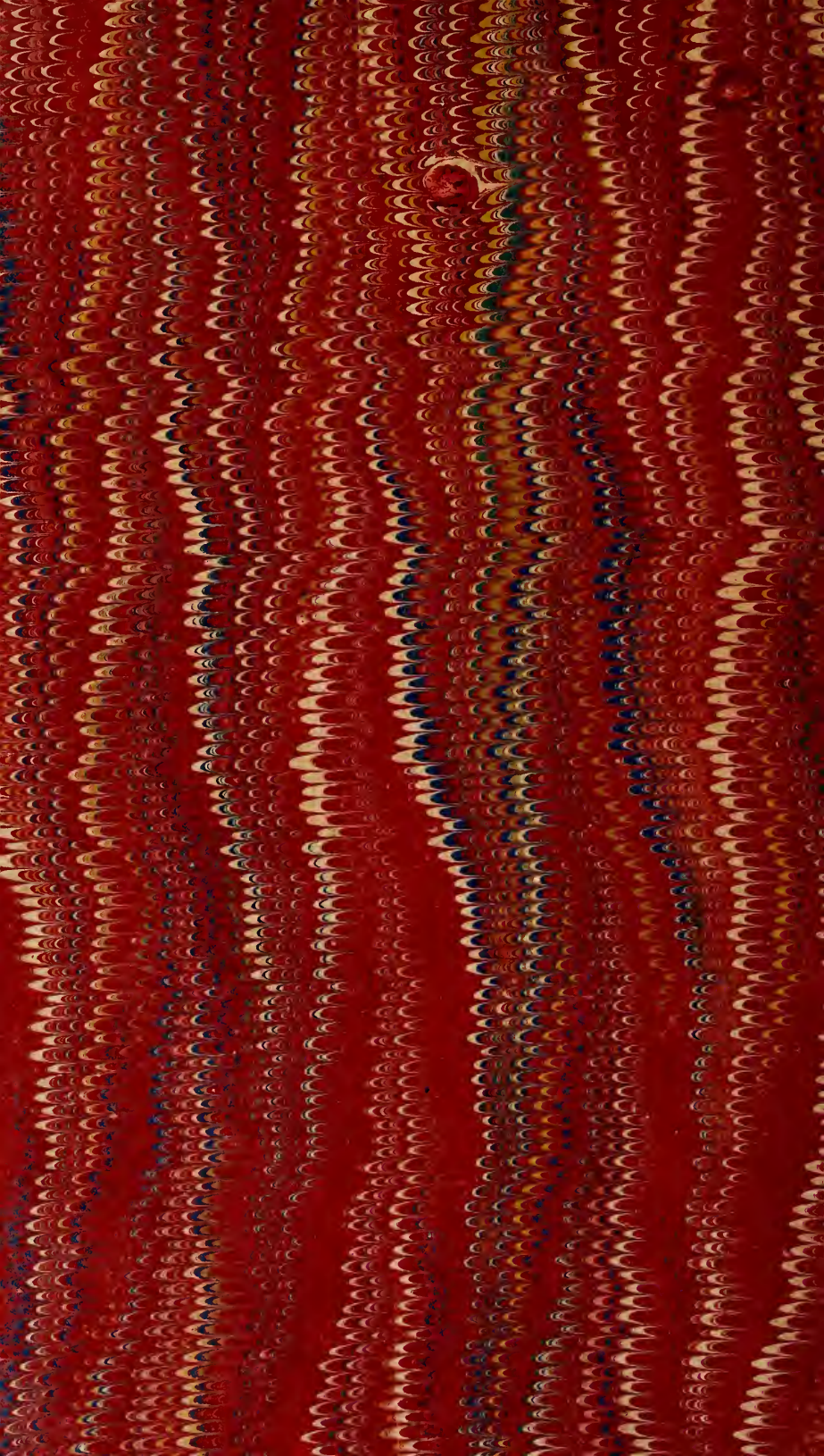
But, dear brethren, can we better show our gratitude for our origin, or more rationally display our admiration for our Fathers, than by a wise reference to their principles, in the education of our children? Would we transmit our institutions to posterity? Shall our Protestant Religion, liberty of conscience, social order, and civil freedom, be handed down to bless the future? Shall those lights, spiritual and moral, which Providence hung out in our heavens two centuries ago, and which, from a feeble beginning, have become at length the "great lights" of the world, still shed their healthful beams on the nations, and still continue to carry truth and peace to mankind? Then must we maintain, in the nurture of infancy and the education of youth, those principles, to which history and experience, amongst us, have given their imprimatur.

Let not the inventions of a softer age and more fanciful training supersede that well-tried mould, out of which came the heroes who ventured all in

the struggle and achievement of American Independence and Society—the Fathers and Mothers of blessed memory. The old Family Bible, and the Assembly's Catechism, were the simple and efficient manuals in the training of generations, we shall ever remember with pride. In that venerable literature, of which these were the lights, the elements of strength, virtue and intelligence were embodied, which moulded a noble race.

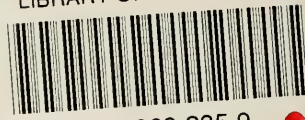
That education which sent its martyrs to the battle-fields of liberty, its statesmen to plead the cause of man before kings and senates, and its ministers to teach the reforms of civilization and administer the consolations of the gospel to the heathen, was a Puritan education. The standard which the profound Howe, the learned Owen, the mild and graceful Flavel, and the devout Baxter, illustrated in England, was the acknowledged standard of our ancestors. And to this Puritan, Orthodox literature, says the historian Bancroft, the world does not know how deeply it is indebted!

These things, dear brethren, we beg you not to forget. The errors of the past we would not revive; but God forbid, that with some errors and imperfections, we should consign to neglect great principles of truth. Let education, at least in the family and the church, return to the old standard, and be refreshed and invigorated by a larger infusion of the pure doctrine of the olden time, and let our children be taught to appreciate the principles and imitate the virtues of the Fathers.





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